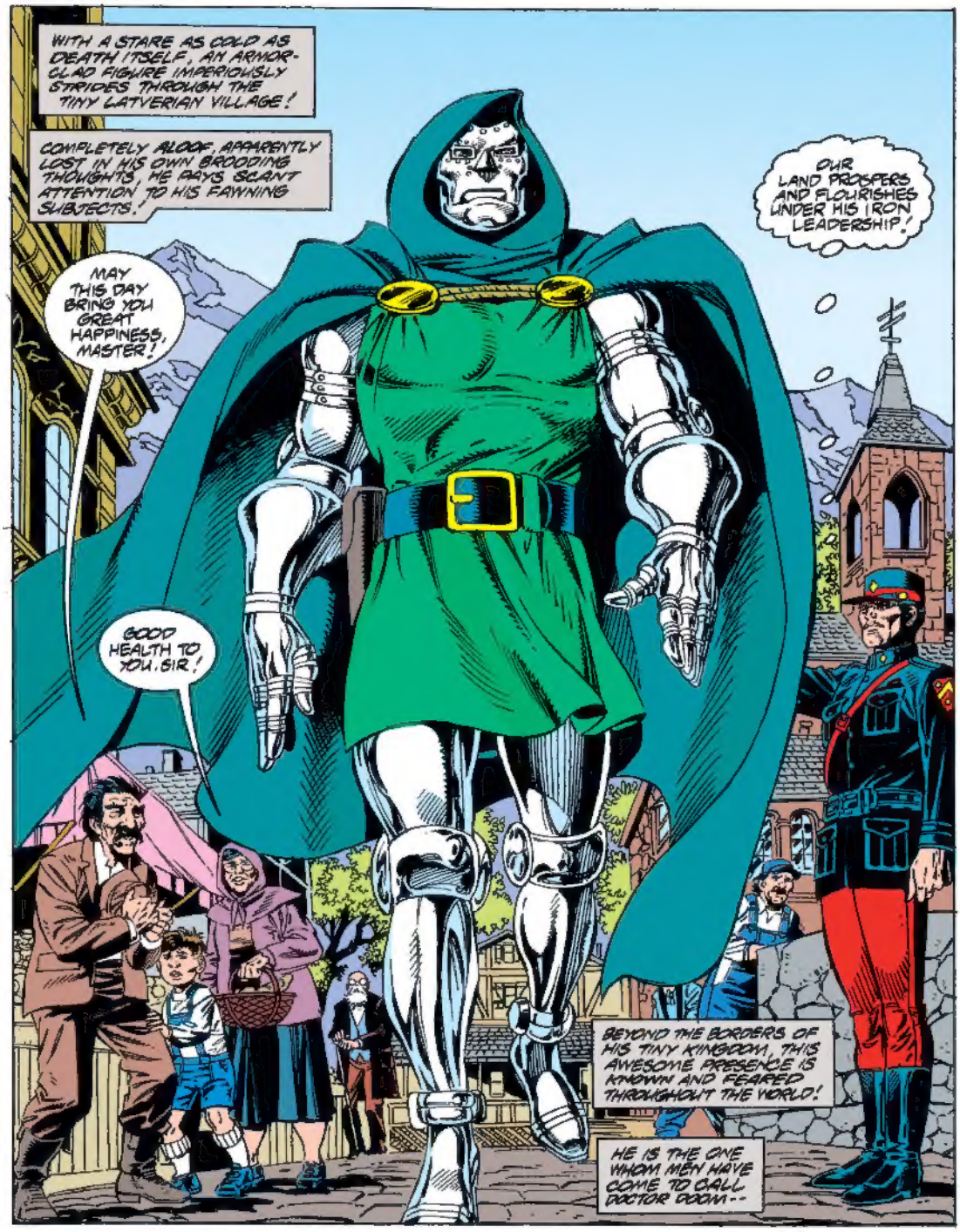
MARVEL COMICS
THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
Fantastic Four
396
JAN
P.C. RYAN '94
DOOMQUEST!

REED RICHARDS MISTER FANTASTIC! **BEN GRIMM,** THE THING! **SUE RICHARDS,** INVISIBLE WOMAN! **JOHNNY STORM,** THE HUMAN TORCH! TRANSFORMED BY AN ACCIDENT IN OUTER SPACE INTO SOMETHING MUCH MORE THAN HUMAN, THEY VOWED TO USE THEIR AWESOME POWERS TO HELP MANKIND CHART THE UNKNOWN. STAN LEE PRESENTS. . .


WITH A STARE AS COLD AS DEATH ITSELF, AN ARMOR-CLAD FIGURE IMPERIOUSLY STRIDES THROUGH THE TINY LATVERIAN VILLAGE!
COMPLETELY ALOOF, APPARENTLY LOST IN HIS OWN BROODING THOUGHTS, HE PAYS SCANT ATTENTION TO HIS FAWNING SUBJECTS.
MAY THIS DAY BRING YOU GREAT HAPPINESS, MASTER!
GOOD HEALTH TO YOU, SIR!
OUR LAND PROSPERS AND FLOURISHES UNDER HIS IRON LEADERSHIP!
BEYOND THE BORDERS OF HIS TINY KINGDOM, THIS AWESOME PRESENCE IS KNOWN AND FEARED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD!
HE IS THE ONE WHOM MEN HAVE COME TO CALL DOCTOR DOOM--

© 2013 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved. All characters featured in this issue and the distinctive names and likenesses thereof, and all related indicia are trademarks of Marvel Characters, Inc. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. WWW. MARVEL.COM

IN SEARCH OF DOOM!

--AND HE IS PRESENTLY MISSING AND PRESUMED DEAD!

THAT'S ENOUGH FOR ONE DAY! DIRECT THE DOOMSBOT TO RETURN TO THE IMPERIAL CASTLE!

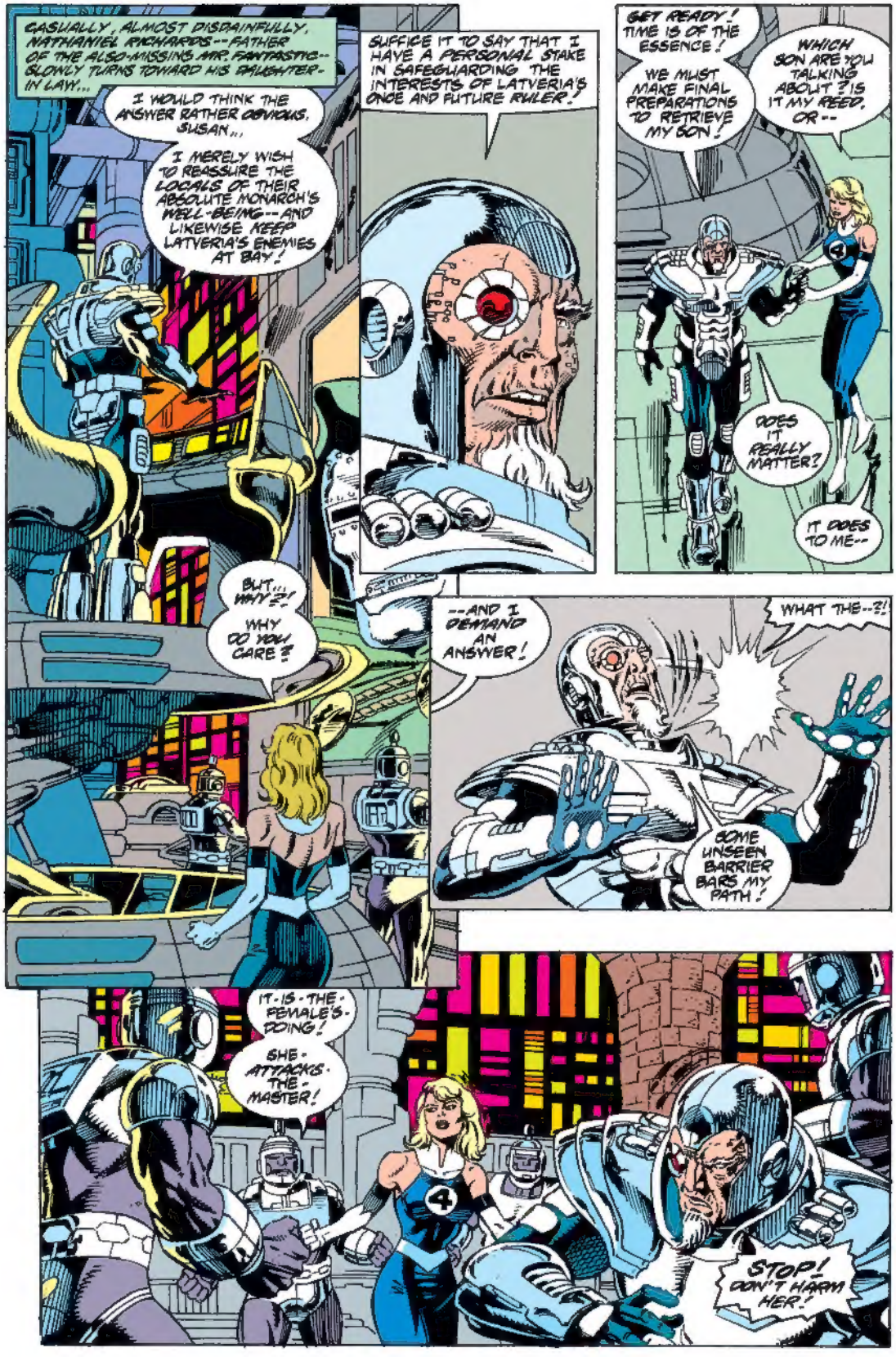
NATHAN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

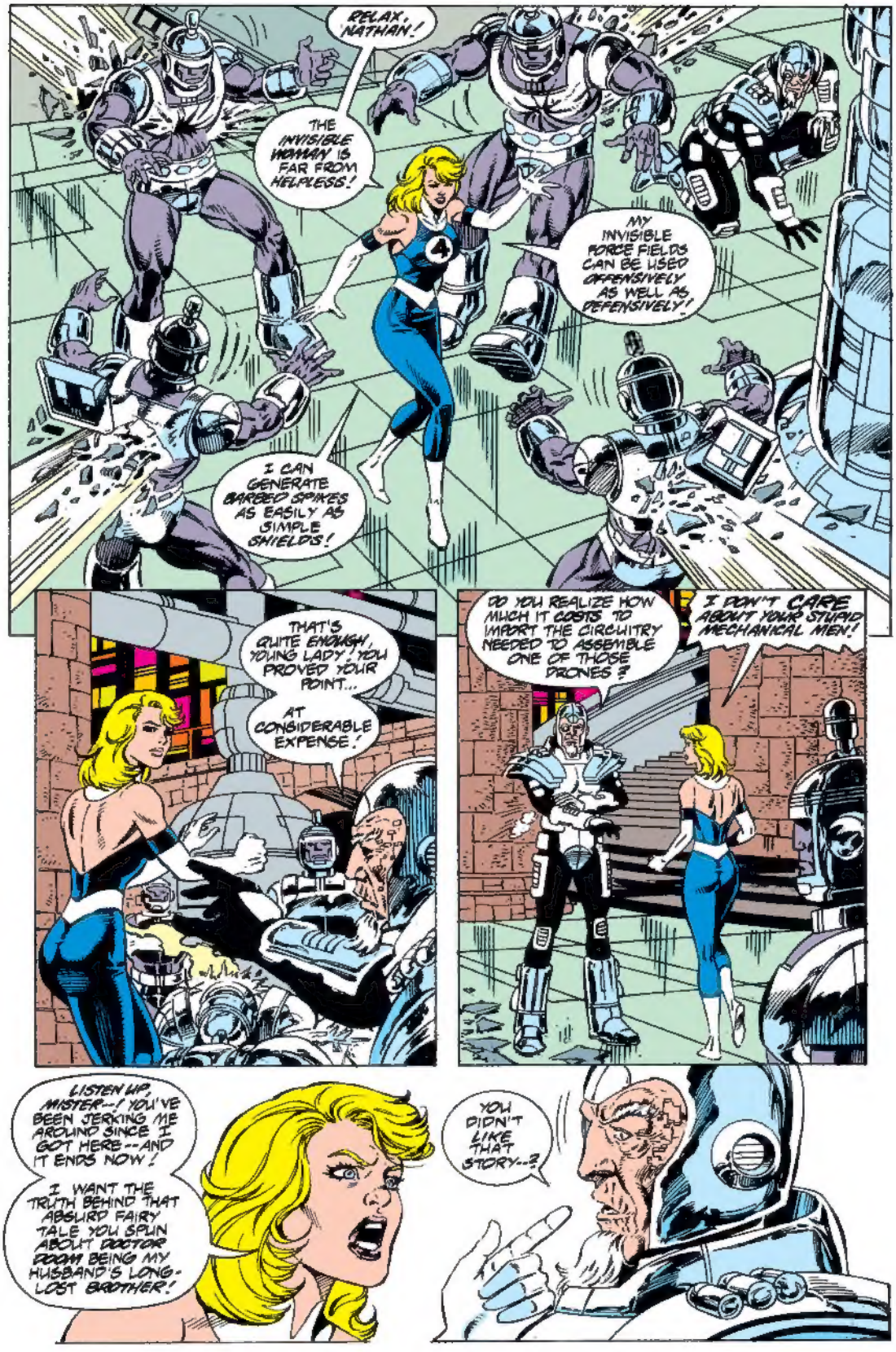
WHY ON EARTH ARE YOU PERPETUATING THIS RIDICULOUS CHARADE?

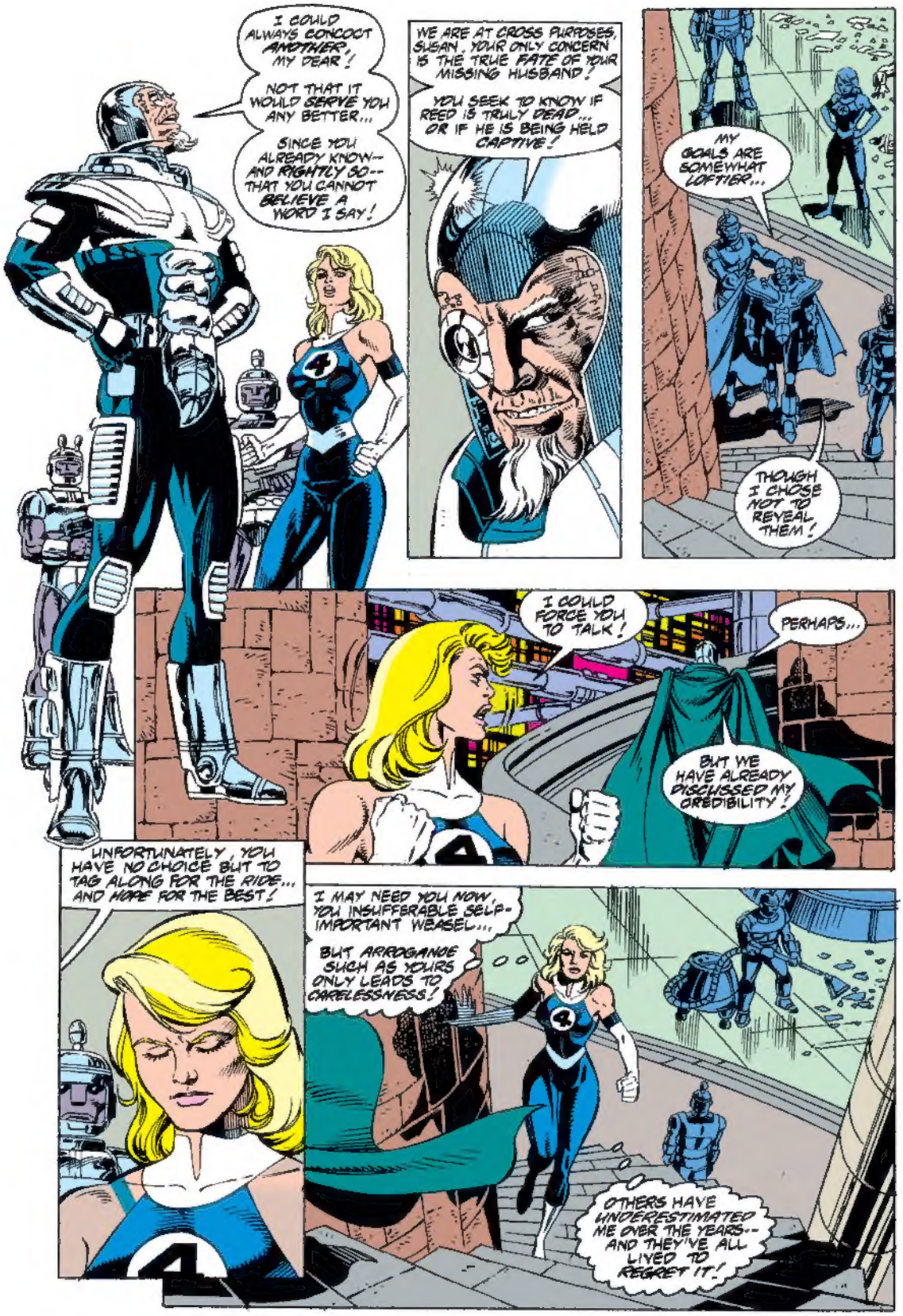
WE-HEAR-AND-OBEY-MASTER!

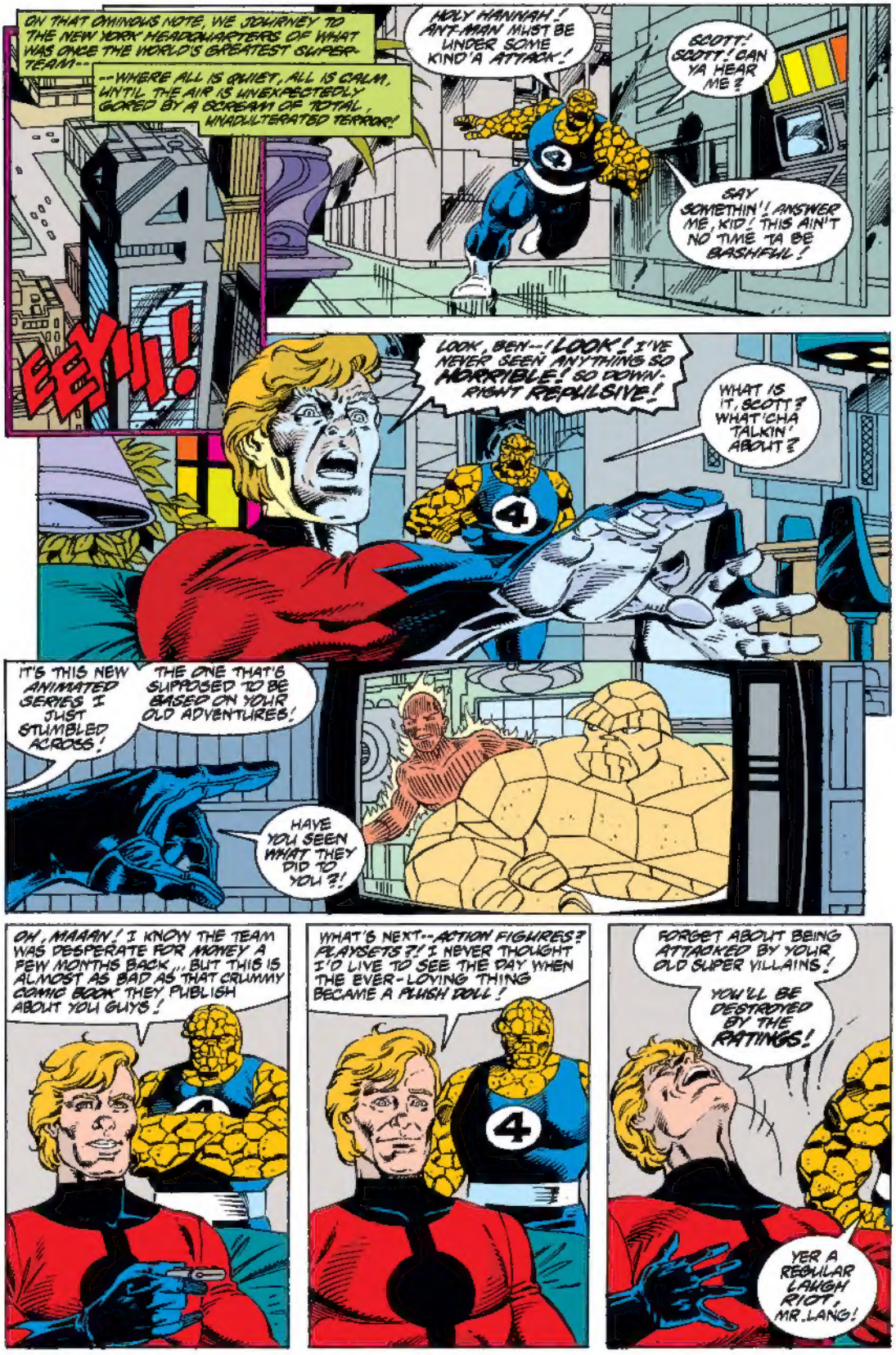
A STIRRING TALE OF COURAGEOUS HOPE AND BITTER BETRAYAL PRODUCED BY

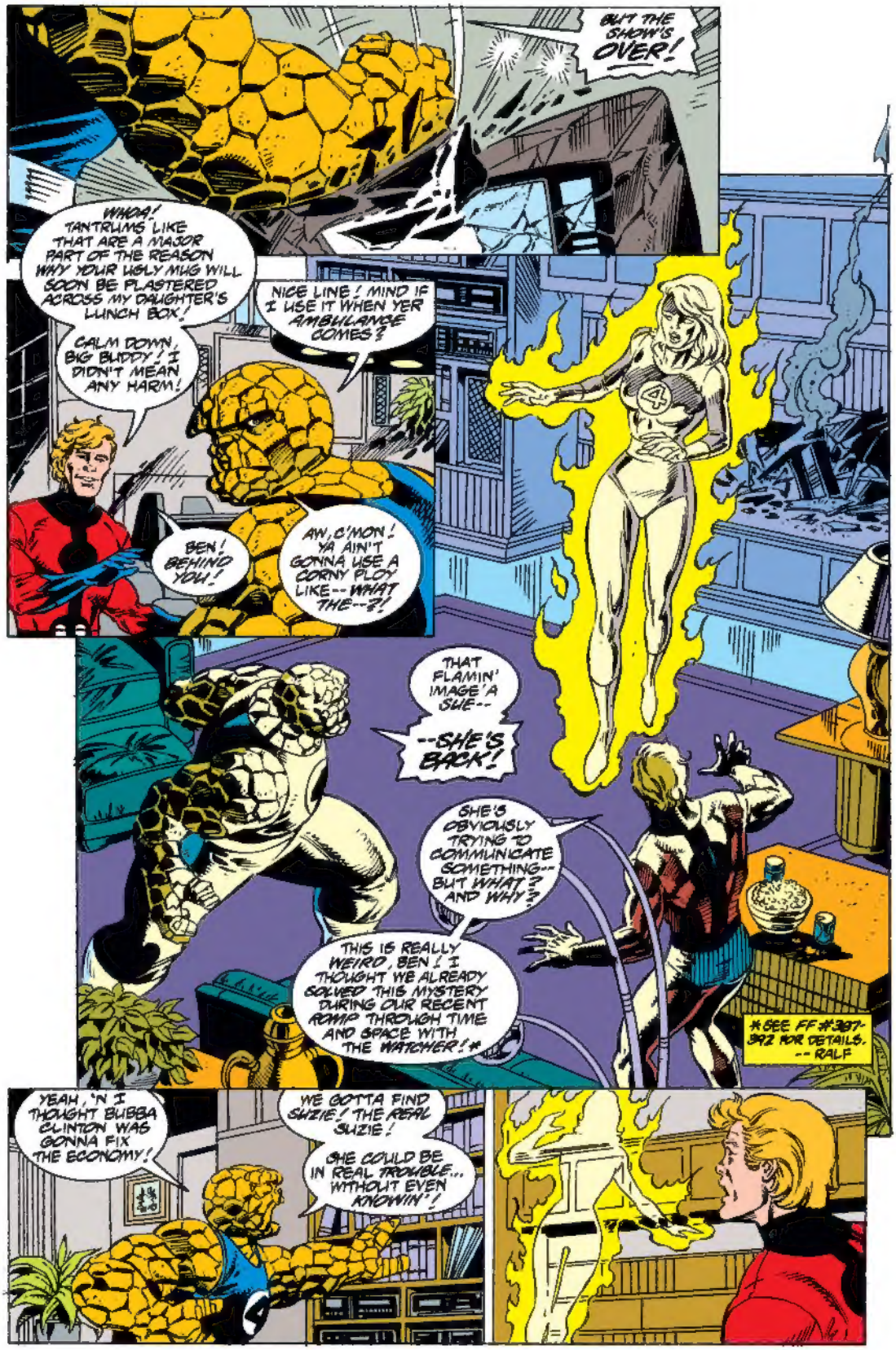
TOM DEFALCO
writer
PAUL RYAN
penciler
DAN BULANADI
inker
STEVE DUTRO
letterer
JOHN KALISZ
colorist
RALPH MACCHIO
waste

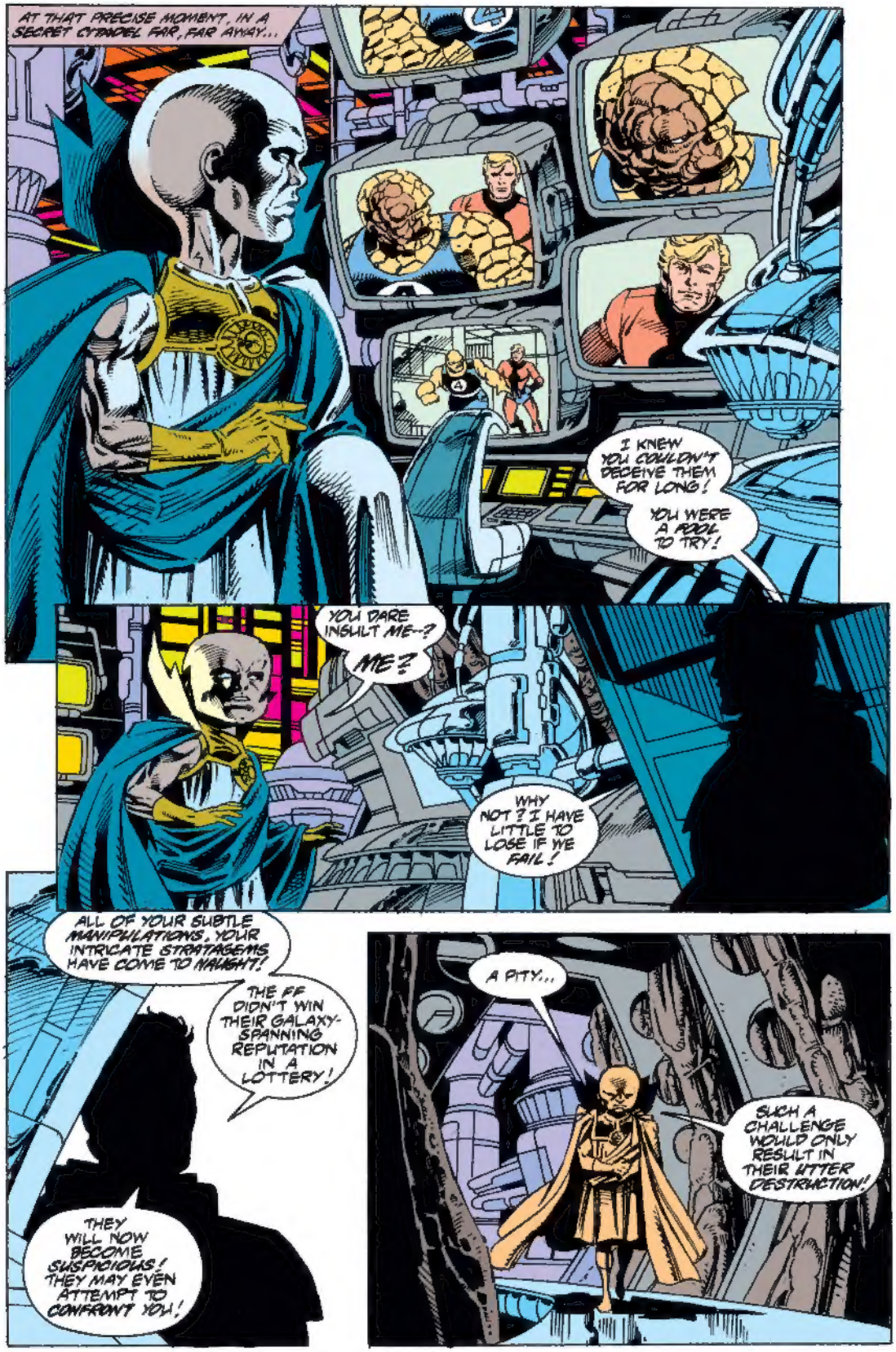

CASUALLY, ALMOST DISDAINFULLY, NATHANIEL RICHARDS--FATHER OF THE ALSO-MISSING MR. FANTASTIC--SLOWLY TURNS TOWARD HIS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW...
I WOULD THINK THE ANSWER RATHER OBVIOUS, SUSAN...
I MERELY WISH TO REASSURE THE LOCALS OF THEIR ABSOLUTE MONARCH'S WELL-BEING--AND LIKEWISE KEEP LATVERIA'S ENEMIES AT BAY!
BUT...WAIT?! WHY DO YOU CARE?
SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT I HAVE A PERSONAL STAKE IN SAFEGUARDING THE INTERESTS OF LATVERIA'S ONCE AND FUTURE RULER!
GET READY! TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE!
WE MUST MAKE FINAL PREPARATIONS TO RETRIEVE MY SON!
WHICH SON ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! IS IT MY REED, OR--
DOES IT REALLY MATTER?
IT DOES TO ME--
--AND I DEMAND AN ANSWER!
WHAT THE--?!
SOME UNSEEN BARRIER BARS MY PATH!
IT-IS-THE-FEMALE'S-DOING!
SHE-ATTACKS-THE-MASTER!
STOP! DON'T HARM HER!

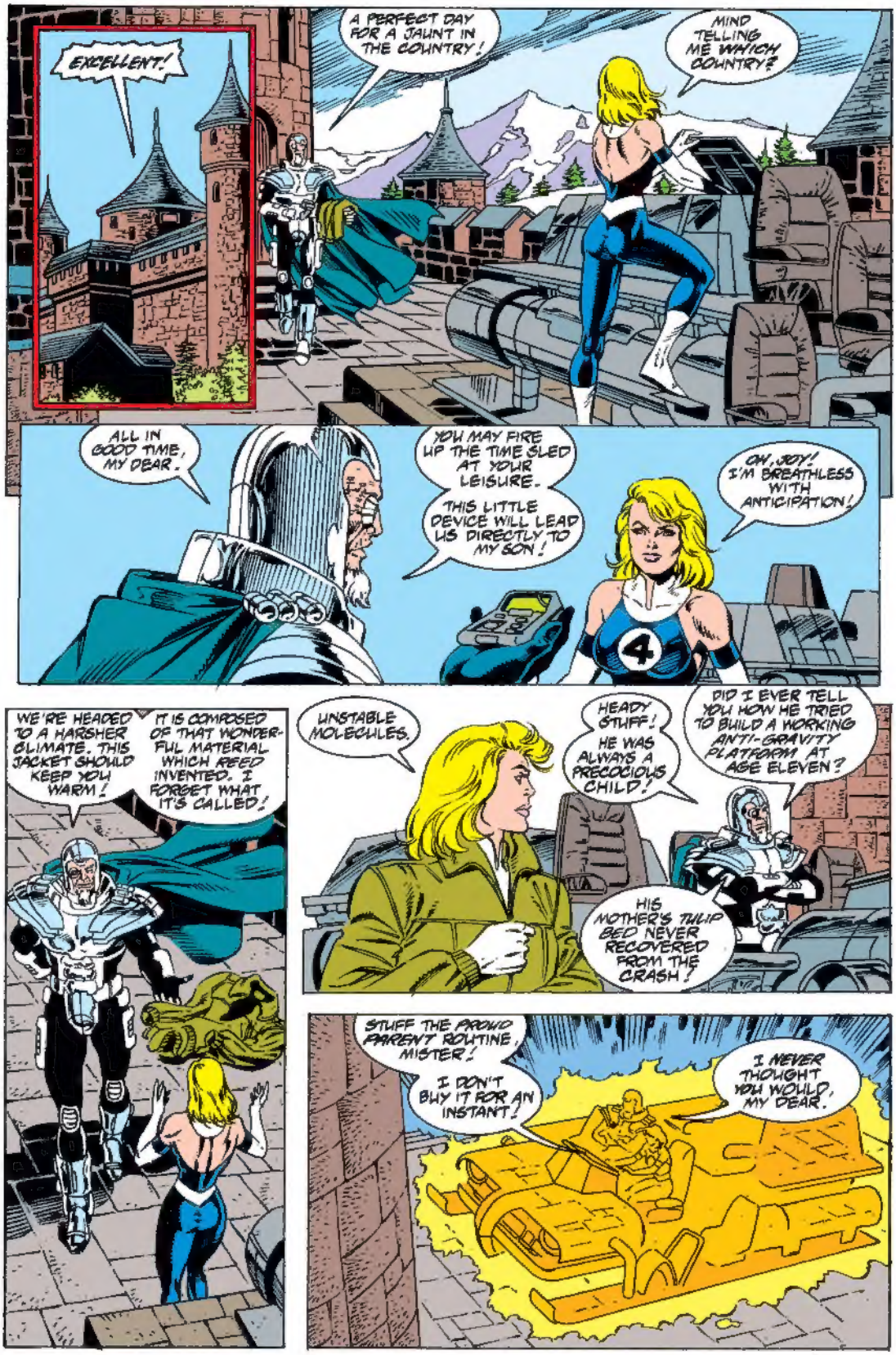

RELAX, NATHAN!
THE INVISIBLE WOMAN IS FAR FROM HELPLESS!
MY INVISIBLE FORCE FIELDS CAN BE USED OFFENSIVELY AS WELL AS DEFENSIVELY!
I CAN GENERATE BARBED SPIKES AS EASILY AS SIMPLE SHIELDS!
THAT'S QUITE ENOUGH, YOUNG LADY! YOU PROVED YOUR POINT...
AT CONSIDERABLE EXPENSE!
DO YOU REALIZE HOW MUCH IT COSTS TO IMPORT THE CIRCUITRY NEEDED TO ASSEMBLE ONE OF THOSE DRONES?
I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR STUPID MECHANICAL MEN!
LISTEN UP, MISTER--! YOU'VE BEEN JERKING ME AROUND SINCE I GOT HERE--AND IT ENDS NOW!
I WANT THE TRUTH BEHIND THAT ABSURD FAIRY TALE YOU SPUN ABOUT DOCTOR DOOM BEING MY HUSBAND'S LONG-LOST BROTHER!
YOU DIDN'T LIKE THAT STORY--?

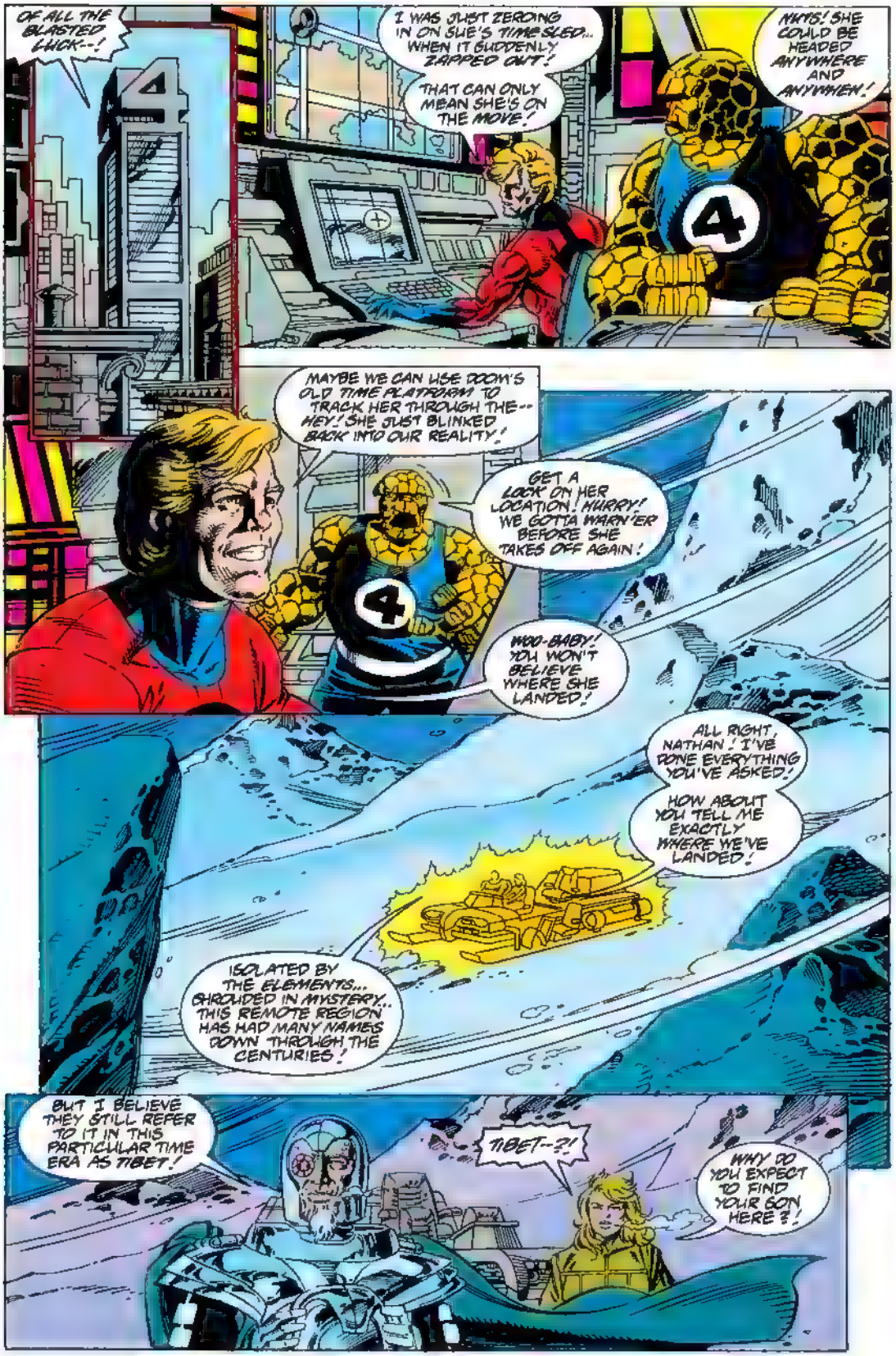

I COULD ALWAYS CONCOCT ANOTHER, MY DEAR!
NOT THAT IT WOULD SERVE YOU ANY BETTER...
SINCE YOU ALREADY KNOW-- AND RIGHTLY SO-- THAT YOU CANNOT BELIEVE A WORD I SAY!
WE ARE AT CROSS PURPOSES, SUSAN. YOUR ONLY CONCERN IS THE TRUE FATE OF YOUR MISSING HUSBAND!
YOU SEEK TO KNOW IF REED IS TRULY DEAD... OR IF HE IS BEING HELD CAPTIVE!
MY GOALS ARE SOMEWHAT LOFTIER...
THOUGH I CHOSE NOT TO REVEAL THEM!
I COULD FORCE YOU TO TALK!
PERHAPS...
BUT WE HAVE ALREADY DISCUSSED MY CREDIBILITY!
UNFORTUNATELY, YOU HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO TAG ALONG FOR THE RIDE... AND HOPE FOR THE BEST!
I MAY NEED YOU NOW, YOU INSUFFERABLE SELF-IMPORTANT WEASEL...
BUT ARROGANCE SUCH AS YOURS ONLY LEADS TO CARELESSNESS!
OTHERS HAVE UNDERESTIMATED ME OVER THE YEARS-- AND THEY'VE ALL LIVED TO REGRET IT!

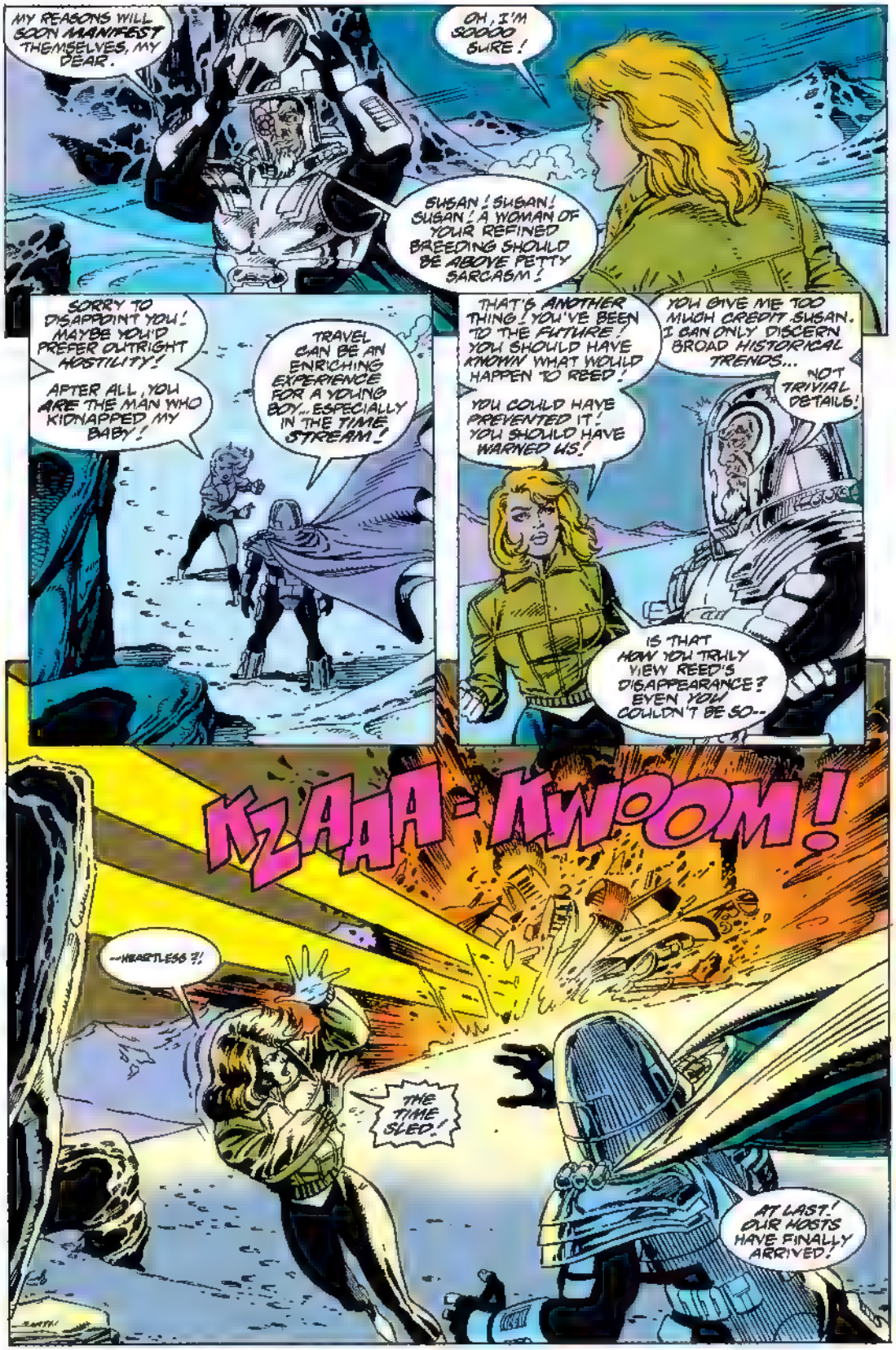

ON THAT OMINOUS NOTE, WE JOURNEY TO THE NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS OF WHAT WAS ONCE THE WORLD'S GREATEST SUPER-TEAM--
--WHERE ALL IS QUIET, ALL IS CALM, UNTIL THE AIR IS UNEXPECTEDLY GORED BY A SCREAM OF TOTAL, UNADULTERATED TERROR!
EEYII!
HOLY HANNAH! ANT-MAN MUST BE UNDER SOME KIND'A ATTACK!
SCOTT! SCOTT! CAN YA HEAR ME?
SAY SOMETHIN'! ANSWER ME, KID! THIS AIN'T NO TIME TA BE BASHFUL!
LOOK, BEN--! LOOK! I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING SO HORRIBLE! SO DOWN-RIGHT REPULSIVE!
WHAT IS IT, SCOTT? WHAT'CHA TALKIN' ABOUT?
IT'S THIS NEW ANIMATED SERIES I JUST STUMBLED ACROSS!
THE ONE THAT'S SUPPOSED TO BE BASED ON YOUR OLD ADVENTURES!
HAVE YOU SEEN WHAT THEY DID TO YOU?!
OH, MAAAN! I KNOW THE TEAM WAS DESPERATE FOR MONEY A FEW MONTHS BACK... BUT THIS IS ALMOST AS BAD AS THAT CRUMMY COMIC BOOK THEY PUBLISH ABOUT YOU GUYS!
WHAT'S NEXT--ACTION FIGURES? PLAYSETS?! I NEVER THOUGHT I'D LIVE TO SEE THE DAY WHEN THE EVER-LOVING THING BECAME A PLUSH DOLL!
FORGET ABOUT BEING ATTACKED BY YOUR OLD SUPER VILLAINS!
YOU'LL BE DESTROYED BY THE RATINGS!
YER A REGULAR LAUGH RIOT, MR. LANG!

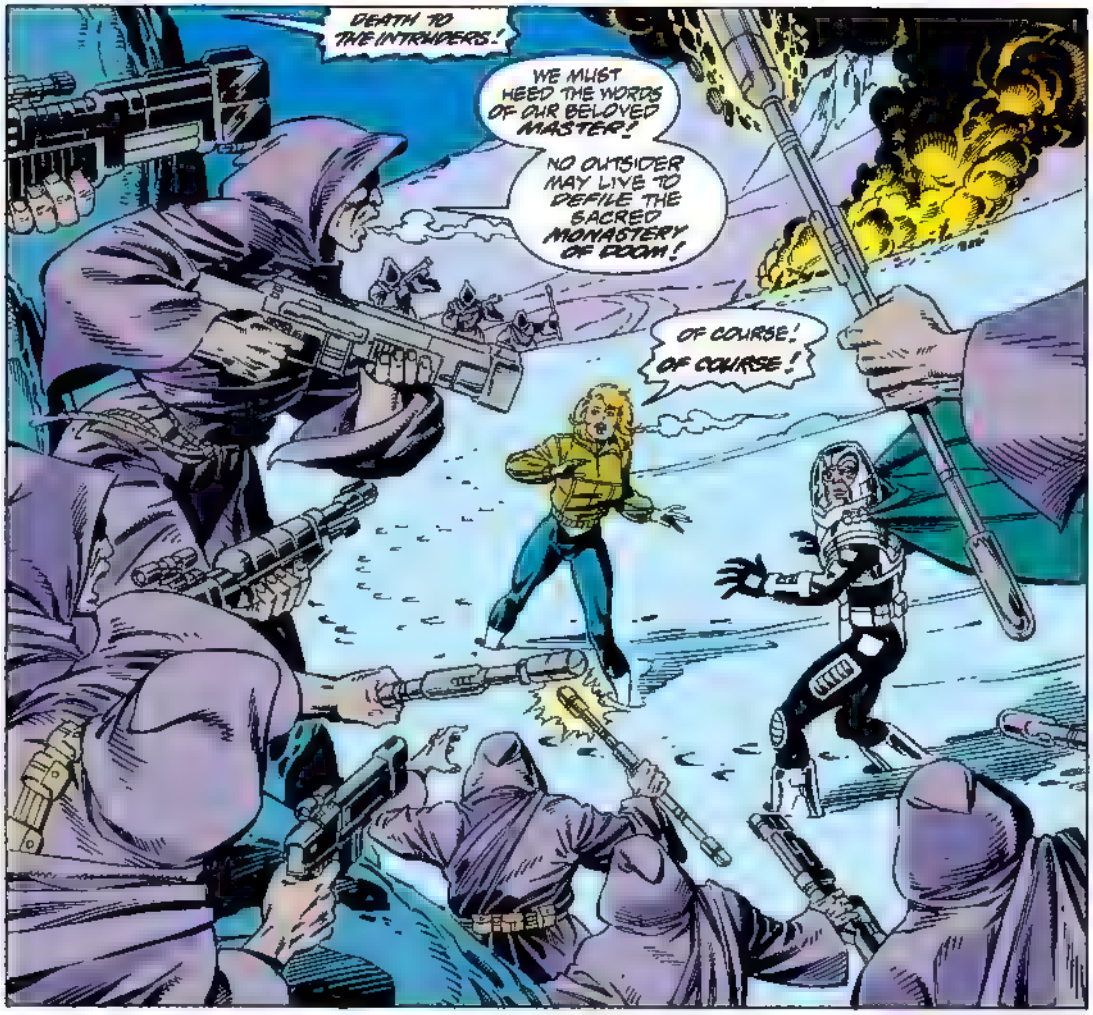

BUT THE SHOW'S OVER!
WHOA! TANTRUMS LIKE THAT ARE A MAJOR PART OF THE REASON WHY YOUR UGLY MUG WILL SOON BE PLASTERED ACROSS MY DAUGHTER'S LUNCH BOX!
NICE LINE! MIND IF I USE IT WHEN YER AMBULANCE COMES?
CALM DOWN, BIG BUDDY! I DIDN'T MEAN ANY HARM!
BEN! BEHIND YOU!
AW, C'MON! YA AIN'T GONNA USE A CORNY PLOY LIKE--WHAT THE--?!
THAT FLAMIN' IMAGE 'A SUE--
--SHE'S BACK!
SHE'S OBVIOUSLY TRYING TO COMMUNICATE SOMETHING--BUT WHAT?? AND WHY??
THIS IS REALLY WEIRD, BEN! I THOUGHT WE ALREADY SOLVED THIS MYSTERY DURING OUR RECENT ROMP THROUGH TIME AND SPACE WITH THE WATCHER!*
* SEE FF #387-392 FOR DETAILS. -- RALF
YEAH, 'N I THOUGHT BUBBA CLINTON WAS GONNA FIX THE ECONOMY!
WE GOTTA FIND SUZIE! THE REAL SUZIE!
SHE COULD BE IN REAL TROUBLE... WITHOUT EVEN KNOWIN'!


AT THAT PRECISE MOMENT, IN A SECRET CITADEL FAR, FAR AWAY...
I KNEW YOU COULDN'T DECEIVE THEM FOR LONG!
YOU WERE A FOOL TO TRY!
YOU DARE INSULT ME--?
ME?
WHY NOT? I HAVE LITTLE TO LOSE IF WE FAIL!
ALL OF YOUR SUBTLE MANIPULATIONS, YOUR INTRICATE STRATAGEMS HAVE COME TO NAUGHT!
THE FF DIDN'T WIN THEIR GALAXY-SPANNING REPUTATION IN A LOTTERY!
THEY WILL NOW BECOME SUSPICIOUS! THEY MAY EVEN ATTEMPT TO CONFRONT YOU!
A PITY...
SUCH A CHALLENGE WOULD ONLY RESULT IN THEIR UTTER DESTRUCTION!

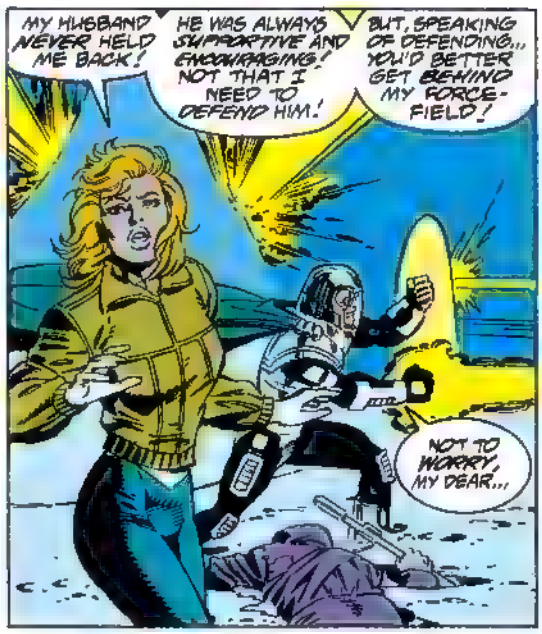

EXCELLENT!
A PERFECT DAY FOR A JAUNT IN THE COUNTRY!
MIND TELLING ME WHICH COUNTRY?
ALL IN GOOD TIME, MY DEAR.
YOU MAY FIRE UP THE TIME SLED AT YOUR LEISURE.
THIS LITTLE DEVICE WILL LEAD US DIRECTLY TO MY SON!
OH, JOY! I'M BREATHLESS WITH ANTICIPATION!
WE'RE HEADED TO A HARSHER CLIMATE. THIS JACKET SHOULD KEEP YOU WARM!
IT IS COMPOSED OF THAT WONDERFUL MATERIAL WHICH REED INVENTED. I FORGET WHAT IT'S CALLED!
UNSTABLE MOLECULES.
HEADY STUFF! HE WAS ALWAYS A PRECOCIOUS CHILD!
DID I EVER TELL YOU HOW HE TRIED TO BUILD A WORKING ANTI-GRAVITY PLATFORM AT AGE ELEVEN?
HIS MOTHER'S TULIP BED NEVER RECOVERED FROM THE CRASH!
STUFF THE PROUD PARENT ROUTINE, MISTER!
I DON'T BUY IT FOR AN INSTANT!
I NEVER THOUGHT YOU WOULD, MY DEAR.


OF ALL THE BLASTED LUCK--!
I WAS JUST ZEROING IN ON SUE'S TIME SLED... WHEN IT SUDDENLY ZAPPED OUT!
THAT CAN ONLY MEAN SHE'S ON THE MOVE!
NUTS! SHE COULD BE HEADED ANYWHERE AND ANYWHEN!
MAYBE WE CAN USE DOOM'S OLD TIME PLATFORM TO TRACK HER THROUGH THE-- HEY! SHE JUST BLINKED BACK INTO OUR REALITY!
GET A LOCK ON HER LOCATION! HURRY! WE GOTTA WARN'ER BEFORE SHE TAKES OFF AGAIN!
WOO-BABY! YOU WON'T BELIEVE WHERE SHE LANDED!
ALL RIGHT, NATHAN! I'VE DONE EVERYTHING YOU'VE ASKED!
HOW ABOUT YOU TELL ME EXACTLY WHERE WE'VE LANDED!
ISOLATED BY THE ELEMENTS... SHROUDED IN MYSTERY... THIS REMOTE REGION HAS HAD MANY NAMES DOWN THROUGH THE CENTURIES!
BUT I BELIEVE THEY STILL REFER TO IT IN THIS PARTICULAR TIME ERA AS TIBET!
TIBET--?!
WHY DO YOU EXPECT TO FIND YOUR SON HERE?!

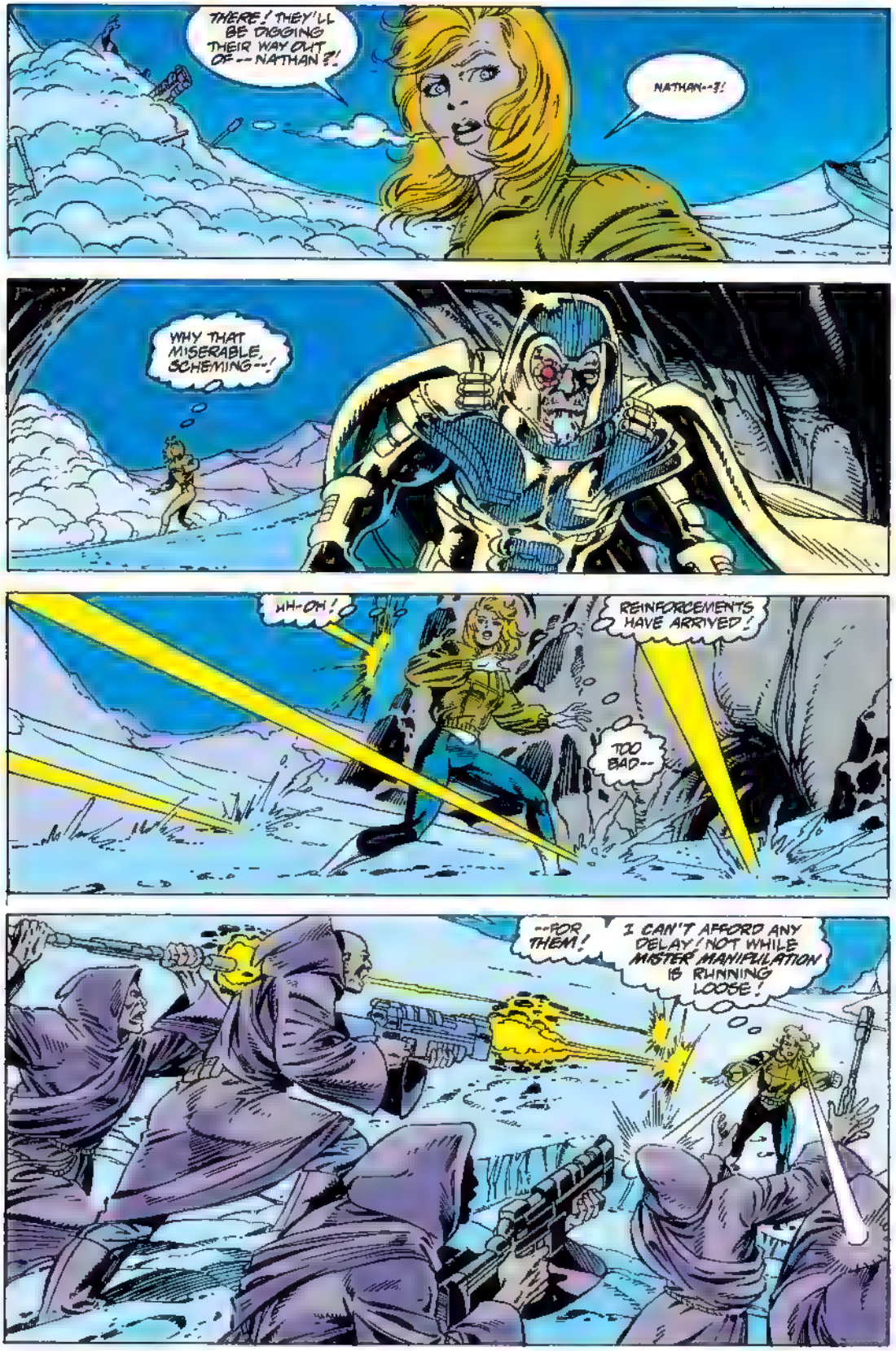

MY REASONS WILL SOON MANIFEST THEMSELVES, MY DEAR.
OH, I'M SOOOO SURE!
SUSAN! SUSAN! SUSAN! A WOMAN OF YOUR REFINED BREEDING SHOULD BE ABOVE PETTY SARCASM!
SORRY TO DISAPPOINT YOU! MAYBE YOU'D PREFER OUTRIGHT HOSTILITY!
AFTER ALL, YOU ARE THE MAN WHO KIDNAPPED MY BABY!
TRAVEL CAN BE AN ENRICHING EXPERIENCE FOR A YOUNG BOY... ESPECIALLY IN THE TIME STREAM!
THAT'S ANOTHER THING! YOU'VE BEEN TO THE FUTURE! YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO REED!
YOU COULD HAVE PREVENTED IT! YOU SHOULD HAVE WARNED US!
YOU GIVE ME TOO MUCH CREDIT, SUSAN. I CAN ONLY DISCERN BROAD HISTORICAL TRENDS...
...NOT TRIVIAL DETAILS!
IS THAT HOW YOU TRULY VIEW REED'S DISAPPEARANCE? EVEN YOU COULDN'T BE SO--
KZAAA-KWOOM!
--HEARTLESS?!
THE TIME SLED!
AT LAST! OUR HOSTS HAVE FINALLY ARRIVED!


DEATH TO THE INTRUDERS!
WE MUST HEED THE WORDS OF OUR BELOVED MASTER!
NO OUTSIDER MAY LIVE TO DEFILE THE SACRED MONASTERY OF DOOM!
OF COURSE! OF COURSE!

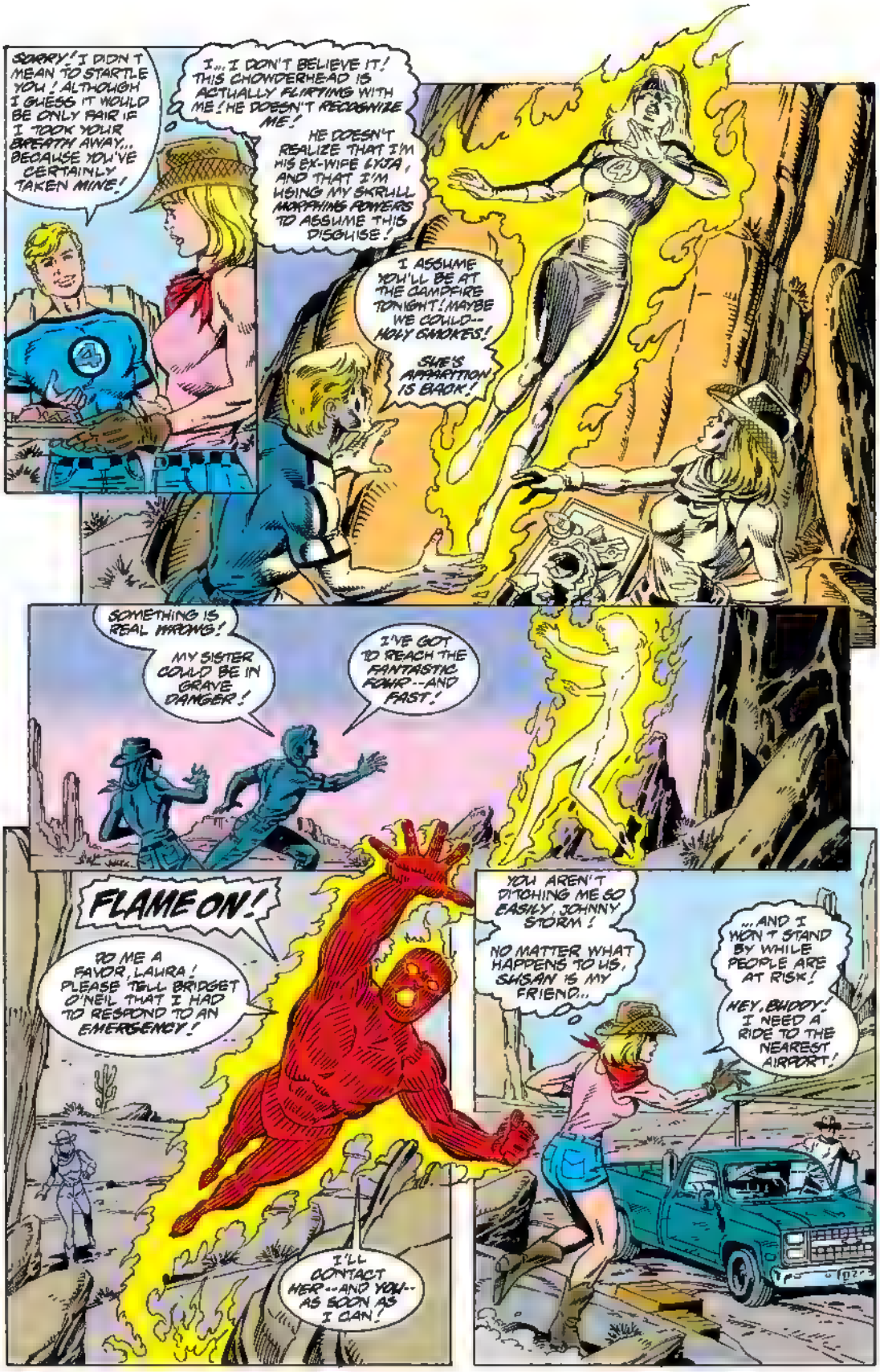
THESE MONKS MUST BELONG TO THE SACRED ORDER WHICH ORIGINALLY TRAINED DOCTOR DOOM IN THE DARK ARTS!
IT MAKES PERFECT SENSE THAT HE'D RETURN HERE... TO LICK HIS WOUNDS!
NOT BAD, SUSAN! YOU'VE CERTAINLY COME INTO YOUR OWN SINCE YOU'VE GOTTEN OUT OF REED'S SHADOW!


MY HUSBAND NEVER HELD ME BACK!
HE WAS ALWAYS SUPPORTIVE AND ENCOURAGING! NOT THAT I NEED TO DEFEND HIM!
BUT, SPEAKING OF DEFENDING... YOU'D BETTER GET BEHIND MY FORCE-FIELD!
NOT TO WORRY, MY DEAR...

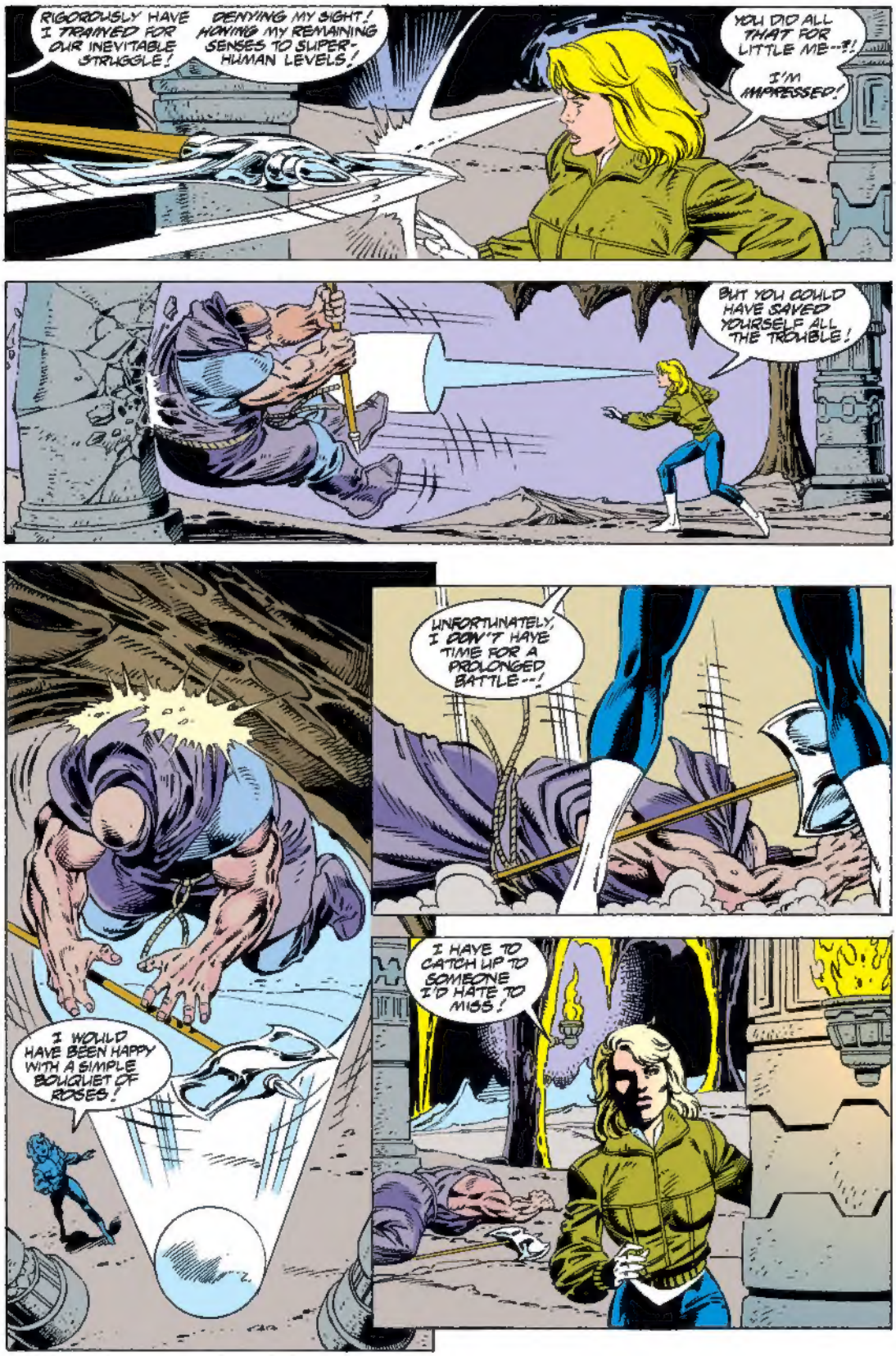
THIS IS HARDLY MY FIRST FIRE FIGHT!
BESIDES, I DON'T INTEND TO REMAIN HERE FOR LONG!
A FEW CAREFULLY-AIMED PLASMA BLASTS WILL CLEAR THE NECESSARY PATH FOR ME!
BARELY HALF A DOZEN OUTSIDERS HAVE ENTERED THIS FORBIDDING CAVE IN THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS!
BUT THE PRIZE I SEEK IS SURELY HIDDEN WITHIN!
I'VE REALLY GOT TO HAND IT TO YOUR BOSS! DOOM NEVER SPARED ANY EXPENSE WHEN IT CAME TO OUTFITTING HIS TROOPS WITH THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY!
THOSE BLASTERS ARE FAR MORE SOPHISTICATED THAN THEY APPEAR!
NOT THAT THEY'RE ANY MATCH FOR MY FORCE-PLOW!
EEYII!


THERE! THEY'LL BE DIGGING THEIR WAY OUT OF -- NATHAN?!
NATHAN--?!
WHY THAT MISERABLE, SCHEMING--!
UH-OH!
REINFORCEMENTS HAVE ARRIVED!
TOO BAD--
--FOR THEM!
I CAN'T AFFORD ANY DELAY! NOT WHILE MISTER MANIPULATION IS RUNNING LOOSE!

HALF A WORLD AWAY
...THE TEMPERATURE OF AMERICA'S GREAT WESTERN DESERT BECOMES CONSIDERABLY WARMER AS A VERY FAMILIAR FLAMING FIGURE SEARS THE SKY!
YAHOO! THIS IS THE LIFE!
I'VE GOT TO THANK BRIDGET O'NEIL FOR INVITING ME ON THIS ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG! I REALLY NEEDED A BREAK FROM THE CONSTANT STRESS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
THE PAST FEW MONTHS HAD TAKEN A TERRIBLE TOLL, BUT I'M FINALLY STARTING TO LOOSEN UP!
HECK, I'M THE ORIGINAL, FUN-LOVING PARTY BOY... THE HIGH-FLYING HUMAN TORCH!
NOT SOME ANAL-RETENTIVE WHINER LIKE SPIDER-MAN!
MEN WANT TO BE LIKE ME!
WOMEN WANT TO BE WITH ME!
I'M JUST THRILLED TO BE ME!
IT'S A REAL SHAME WYATT AND SHE-HULK HAD TO RETURN TO THEIR RESPECTIVE HOMES, BUT MY CALENDAR'S STILL OPEN ENOUGH FOR ME TO HANG OUT FOR A FEW MORE--HEY!
THERE'S THAT CUTE BLONDE I'VE BEEN ANXIOUS TO MEET!
MY BUDDY BRIDGET TRIED TO PLAY MATCHMAKER, AND LEARNED HER NAME IS LAURA GREENE!
MAY AS WELL GIVE HER A THRILL! IT ISN'T EVERY DAY A WOMAN GETS TO MEET A WORLD-FAMOUS CELEBRITY!
HOW'S IT GOING, PRETTY LADY?
OH!


SORRY! I DIDN'T MEAN TO STARTLE YOU! ALTHOUGH I GUESS IT WOULD BE ONLY FAIR IF I TOOK YOUR BREATH AWAY... BECAUSE YOU'VE CERTAINLY TAKEN MINE!
I... I DON'T BELIEVE IT! THIS CHOWDERHEAD IS ACTUALLY FLIRTING WITH ME! HE DOESN'T RECOGNIZE ME!
HE DOESN'T REALIZE THAT I'M HIS EX-WIFE LYJA, AND THAT I'M USING MY SKRULL MORPHING POWERS TO ASSUME THIS DISGUISE!
I ASSUME YOU'LL BE AT THE CAMPFIRE TONIGHT! MAYBE WE COULD-- HOLY SMOKES!
SHE'S APPARITION IS BACK!
SOMETHING IS REAL WRONG!
MY SISTER COULD BE IN GRAVE DANGER!
I'VE GOT TO REACH THE FANTASTIC FOUR--AND FAST!
FLAME ON!
DO ME A FAVOR, LAURA! PLEASE TELL BRIDGET O'NEIL THAT I HAD TO RESPOND TO AN EMERGENCY!
I'LL CONTACT HER--AND YOU-- AS SOON AS I CAN!
YOU AREN'T DITCHING ME SO EASILY, JOHNNY STORM!
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TO US, SUSAN IS MY FRIEND...
...AND I WON'T STAND BY WHILE PEOPLE ARE AT RISK!
HEY, BUDDY! I NEED A RIDE TO THE NEAREST AIRPORT!

MEANWHILE, BACK IN TIBET...
I MUST BE SLIPPING!
IT TOOK ME ALMOST A FULL MINUTE TO FLATTEN THAT SQUAD!
MAYBE I'D BETTER BREAK OUT THE OLD JANE FONDA TAPES, AND GET BACK INTO A REGULAR EXERCISE PROGRAM!
NO SIGN OF NATHAN... BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT HIM TO JUMP OUT AT ME!
HOWEVER, JUST TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE...
I THINK I'LL ASSUME A LOW PROFILE!
I WONDER WHO FOUNDED THIS MONASTERY... AND WHY?!
WHAT WAS ITS ORIGINAL PURPOSE BEFORE DOCTOR DOOM PERVERTED IT?!
THE SOFT WHISPER OF YOUR TREAD! THE GENTLE CARESS OF YOUR BREATH!
I SENSE THAT YOU ARE THE AMERICAN WOMAN WHO CANNOT BE SEEN!
YOU GOT THAT RIGHT... FOR ALL THE GOOD IT SEEMS TO DO ME!


RIGOROUSLY HAVE I TRAINED FOR OUR INEVITABLE STRUGGLE!
DENYING MY SIGHT! HONING MY REMAINING SENSES TO SUPER-HUMAN LEVELS!
YOU DID ALL THAT FOR LITTLE ME--?!
I'M IMPRESSED!
BUT YOU COULD HAVE SAVED YOURSELF ALL THE TROUBLE!
UNFORTUNATELY, I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR A PROLONGED BATTLE--!
I WOULD HAVE BEEN HAPPY WITH A SIMPLE BOUQUET OF ROSES!
I HAVE TO CATCH UP TO SOMEONE I'D HATE TO MISS!

I WONDER IF THAT'S WHERE THEY FIRST FORGED DOOM'S PERSONAL ARMOR?

THERE ARE SO MANY CONTRADICTORY STORIES OF HOW HE WAS SCARRED SO HIDEOUSLY!

WAS IT THE RESULT OF HIS OWN CARELESSNESS IN A LABORATORY EXPERIMENT WHICH WENT AWRY WHILE HE WAS STILL IN COLLEGE?

OR, WAS IT CAUSED BY IMPATIENCE BECAUSE HE REFUSED TO WAIT FOR HIS STILL-MOLTEN METAL MASK TO PROPERLY COOL BEFORE BEING PLACED UPON HIS FACE?

I DOUBT THE WORLD WILL EVER KNOW THE REAL TRUTH! DOOM WAS SUCH A MASTER OF MIS-INFORMATION!

HE WAS ALWAYS REWRITING HIS OWN HISTORY AND--

OH, MY GOD!

REED--!

REED, MY DARLING, HAVE I FINALLY FOUND YOU?!

IS THIS TRULY WHERE DOOM IMPRISONED YOU... WITHIN ONE OF THESE STASIS CHAMBERS?!

I WISH I KNEW THE CURRENT STATE OF YOUR HEALTH!

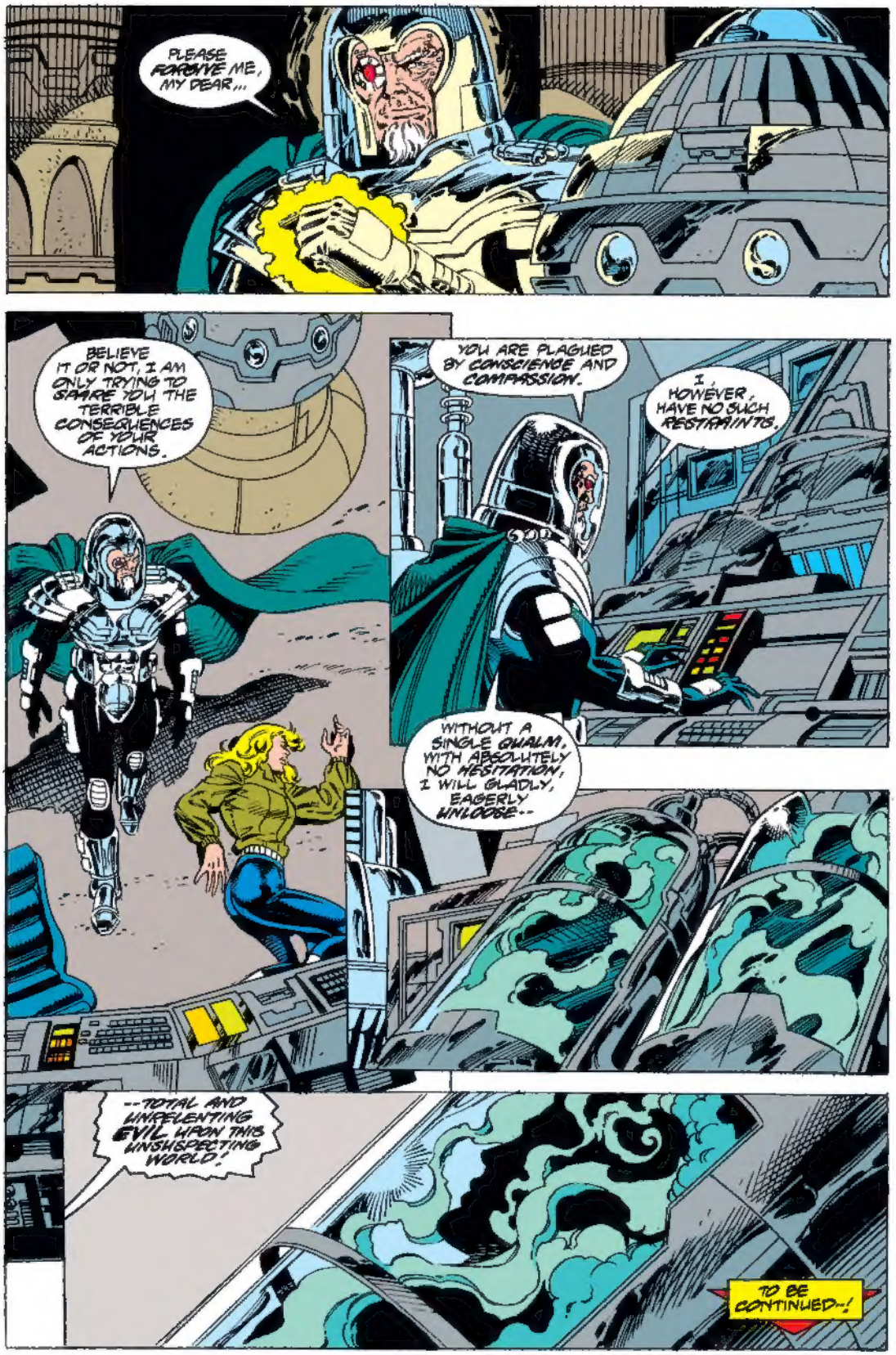
HOW SEVERELY WERE YOU INJURED? IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE FOR ME TO FREE YOU... WITHOUT PUTTING YOU IN GREATER JEOPARDY?

BUT... WHICH ONE?

I'VE GOT TO STUDY THIS CONTROL BOARD. THE SLIGHTEST ERROR, THE MOST MINISCULE MISCALCULATION COULD RESULT IN HORRIBLE REPERCUSSIONS, AND--

KZZAK

ARRRK!


PLEASE FORGIVE ME, MY DEAR...
BELIEVE IT OR NOT, I AM ONLY TRYING TO SPARE YOU THE TERRIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTIONS.
YOU ARE PLAGUED BY CONSCIENCE AND COMPASSION.
I, HOWEVER, HAVE NO SUCH RESTRAINTS.
WITHOUT A SINGLE QUALM, WITH ABSOLUTELY NO HESITATION, I WILL GLADLY, EAGERLY UNLOOSE--
--TOTAL AND UNRELENTING EVIL UPON THIS UNSUSPECTING WORLD!
TO BE CONTINUED--!